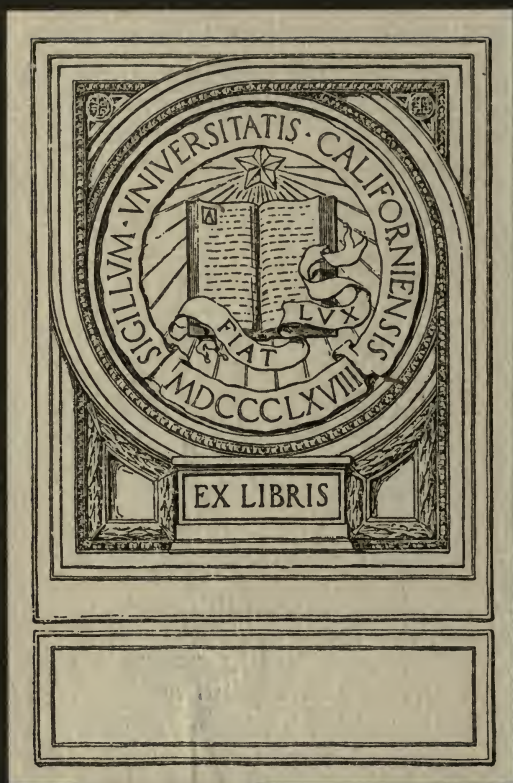


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Blackboard Drawing

A MONOGRAPH

BY

FREDERICK WHITNEY

OF THE

STATE NORMAL SCHOOL
SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

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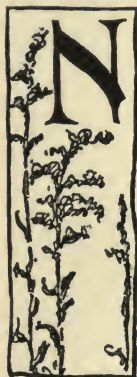
Foreword

THIS MONOGRAPH is a reprint of a series of articles first published in the second volume of the magazine now known as *The School Arts Book*. The articles attracted wide attention both on account of their timeliness and their illustrations. The plates were made from photographs of actual work upon the blackboard by Mr. Whitney, and are undoubtedly the most attractive blackboard drawings ever published. The demand for these articles has been so great that the original editions have been exhausted. They are republished in this form in the hope that they may influence yet more strongly the increasing number of teachers who find the blackboard indispensable in teaching.

HENRY TURNER BAILEY

September, 1903

BLACKBOARD DRAWING

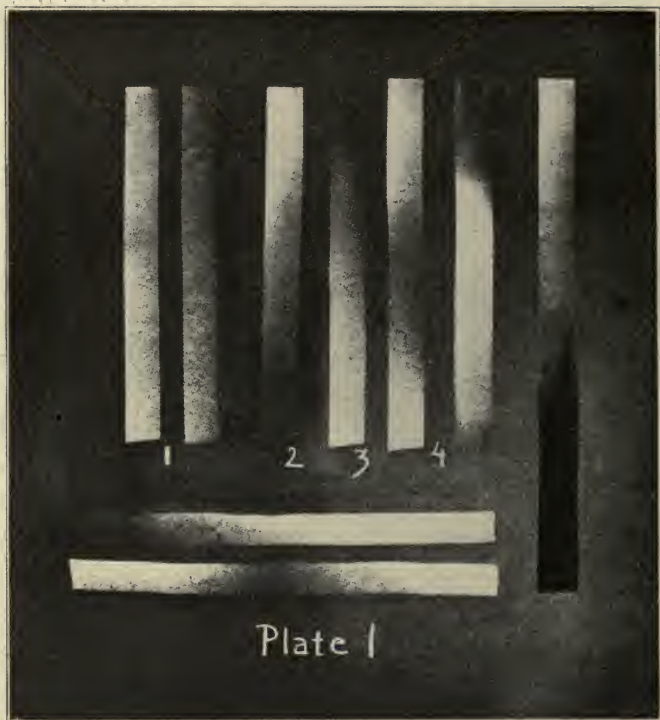


ONE of the teachers who read "The School Arts Book" from month to month doubt in the least the value of drawing in our schools, and there is no need of the slightest argument in its favor. Even in the lowest grades the teacher appreciates drawing as the natural expression of the thought and experience of the child; a spontaneous activity, having its relation to life, not a thing apart from life or an end in itself. Throughout the grades the teacher should cultivate this spirit of freedom and interest, remembering that drawing is a language to be used as naturally and freely as one written or spoken.

Why should these suggestions not apply to the teacher as well as to the child? Why should she not express herself, the interests of school life and of the pupil in the same free, natural way?

Upon entering a schoolroom the teacher finds the blackboards bare and dull. There is little in the line of decoration in the room and in order to relieve this monotony she stencils a border, the picture of some great hero or well-known author, draws with colored chalk the inevitable flags crossed at right angles or puts upon the board some design which possibly may or perhaps may not have relation to the needs of the children, their life and activities, or the industries of the school.

When the drawing on the part of the child becomes the natural and free expression of the activities and interests of

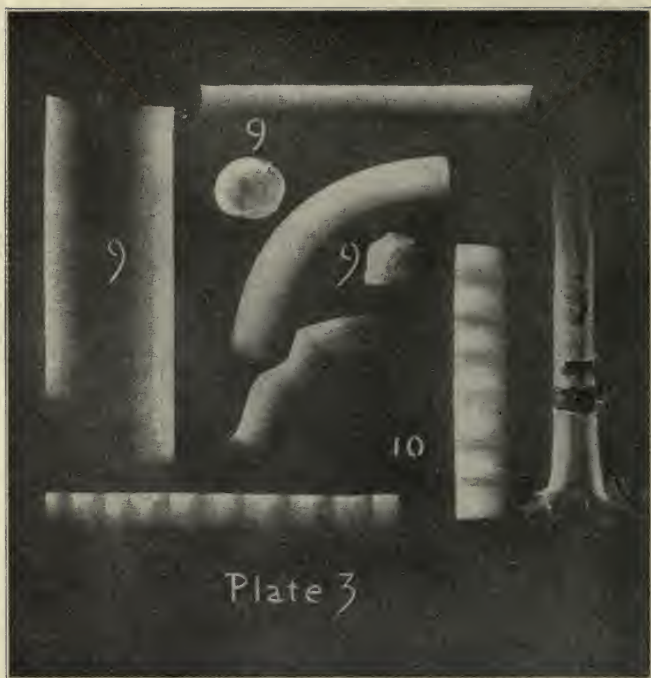


every-day life, and the teacher uses this graphic language in the same manner, the blackboards will be found constantly in use and upon them an ever changing series of drawings. These drawings should be illustrations of the geography, history, literature, nature work or any other line demanding their aid. Let them be drawings upon which a few moments of time are spent, a free sketch illustrating the object or topic as a means of making the subject clearer in the minds of the pupils, not a picture produced by the labored use of chalk and eraser, to be kept upon the board indefinitely as a bit of decoration.



Let me suggest the practice of the following strokes and later we will try their application in various drawings recommended by teachers from several schools. In these illustrations use about two-thirds of a stick of soft blackboard crayon, using the large end and drawing with the side of the chalk. This use of the crayon will produce any tone from white to neutral gray.

No. 1. Place the chalk in a horizontal position and try a smooth even stroke one or two feet in length.



No. 2. A similar stroke in a graded scale letting the pressure become less and less toward the lower end of the stroke.

No. 3. Reverse No. 2 hardly touching the board at first and increasing the pressure toward the lower end.

If charcoal is used for the lower tones, a very satisfactory scale may be produced as in the last illustration on Plate 1.

No. 4. Combine No. 2 and No. 3 in a single stroke. Try all these strokes again and again in a vertical, horizontal, oblique, and curving direction until each can be made in a second or two.



No. 5. Place the chalk in a vertical position upon the board, draw downward, gradually twisting the chalk to a horizontal position.

No. 6. Place the chalk horizontally and draw downward, twisting the chalk to a vertical position.

No. 7. These spots are No. 5 and No. 6 combined. Try them with a short, quick motion of the chalk.

No. 8. Combine two spots similar to the first at No. 7. The leaf in outline requires several lines while the drawing representing the surface was made with two strokes and one

line for the midrib and stem. Try several leaves of different shapes using the stroke suggested on this plate. The pond lily is drawn with this same stroke reduced.

No. 9. Make a scale from left to right by pressure upon one end of the chalk, while giving a vertical stroke. Try this in various directions. Use two parallel strokes and with a bit of charcoal for accent try the trunk of the birch tree.

No. 10. Use No. 4, Plate 1, in a series of lights and darks. This is made by quick pressure at short intervals without removing the chalk from the board. I have seen this used by science teachers to illustrate vibrations or wave lengths; we shall use it later for pictorial purposes.

No. 11. Place the chalk upon the board in a horizontal position, move rapidly back and forth, gradually shortening the stroke, and repeat this exercise in various positions and directions.

No. 12. This drawing was made by the use of No. 11. Draw first a few lines suggesting the growth of the fern, then add the strokes letting the fern dictate the direction, accenting the lighter values by a stronger pressure.

Draw the upper leaf on Plate 4 by the use of stroke No. 6, hardly touching the board for the gray tones, then adding the white tones with a stronger pressure upon the chalk.

Are we sure that we have not tried to make drawing an end rather than a means? Let us remember that there must be a motive prompting the work, an interest or experience back of the drawing which demands expression. In the color work, design, and manual work, the influence of this thought has already

been felt. The object needed in the schoolroom or for the individual use of the pupil is the object designed and made. With this new motive, there comes a growing appreciation and interest on the part of the child.

The blackboard drawing should be governed by the same spirit, the need of the hour, just as surely as the child's work at his desk, and when the teacher realizes this fact, he will never lack a subject for illustration. For instance, in the fall the class may be studying trees, and drawing will be found indispensable.

The children are studying some tree near at hand, comparing trees to discover their points of likeness and difference, collecting pictures of trees and mounting these to illustrate their description, and with this study they are becoming more or less familiar with our common trees. If the teacher should go to the blackboard to enforce a point in regard to the general form of the tree, direction of branches or characteristic details, he will find such sketches a great help. It is the teacher who does such illustrative drawing who holds and interests his class.

Let us try a few simple applications of the practice previously suggested, using the trees as our topic for illustration.

No. 13. Draw a gray, vertical line suggesting the characteristic line of growth in the pine tree. Use the stroke given in No. 11 for the foliage. To represent the foliage in a mass, simply shorten or lengthen the stroke of the chalk, using a greater pressure here and there. With the side of the chalk represent the trunk of the tree where visible and with the point indicate branches.



Certain laws govern blackboard work as well as object drawing on paper. A sketch of the object as a whole must be made first and the massing of the lights and shades must be done before detail is attempted. The general outline may often be sketched with charcoal and corrected when the chalk is used.



No. 14. Try the poplar tree. Again the vertical line is characteristic. Indicate this. Mass the foliage as before, using a vertical rather than a horizontal stroke. Do not remove the chalk from the board until the mass of foliage is represented and remember to give a light pressure for the grays and a strong one for the whites.

It is not the greatest quantity of chalk which gives the best drawing any more than the greatest quantity of pigment in our



color work which gives the best painting. Represent trunk and branches as in No. 13.

No. 15. A bit of landscape indicated by a few strokes of chalk often renders the drawing much more pleasing and at the same time suggests the environment of the tree. The lines used here are those given in No. 1, No. 9 and No. 11, and are easily represented.



No. 16. The willow is another interesting tree for study and is drawn in a similar manner to those previously mentioned. The stroke of the chalk for foliage is a curving one rather than horizontal as in the evergreen or vertical as in the poplar.

No. 17. A suggestion of distance will frequently be found a good background for a tree, building or other similar fore-



ground. The distance is treated in exactly the same manner as the foliage in many of the trees, the side of the chalk giving a gray, uneven surface. In drawing the water represent the reflections with vertical strokes and the ripples with horizontal ones.

No. 18. Make the hillside with two or three gray strokes of No. 1, the clouds with a similar curving stroke, and the trees with charcoal, using the same treatment as in the chalk drawings.



No. 19. Experiment with a few vegetables, or fruit, using the strokes which the illustrations will readily suggest. For the grapes use a short piece of chalk and a quick, curving stroke, the point being used only in accenting.

No. 20. The basket is represented by using No. 10, Plate 3, for the surface and the point for the details. Experi-



ment a while with the handle, begin at the lower end at the left, draw upward, to the right and downward.

The tumbler is represented by using a few gray vertical strokes of the chalk. Accent with chalk for high lights and a bit of charcoal for darks.

In the other objects on Plate 8 let the surface of the vegetable dictate the direction of the stroke, keeping the work as



simple as possible. See with how few touches an effect can be obtained. A variety of illustrations may be attempted, all of which have been suggested by grade teachers as useful in many lines of school work.



An outline drawing upon the blackboard expresses much, and is often better than any attempt at light and shade or variety in tone, yet there are frequent occasions when the representation of solidity or of surface is better obtained in illustrative work by the use of the side of the chalk and charcoal. In such cases leave the blackboard for the middle values and use the charcoal and chalk as in previous sketches.

For instance, make a drawing of the wigwam and canoe, adding some of the tree sketches upon which we have previously worked or simply indicating a few tree trunks.



No. 21. Make a light sketch either with chalk or charcoal, indicating the general form of the objects, or if one has a good idea of form, he may make the drawing without outlining. A few oblique strokes handled in the same manner as the gray tones given in No. 1 will produce the wigwam. The details may be added with chalk or charcoal. A single horizontal stroke curving a bit at either end gives the general form of the canoe. If a few minor markings are given, the children will have no doubt of your intent in the sketch. For the tree trunks

use the stroke suggested by No. 9, and for the water consult No. 17 and No. 18, Plate 7.

No. 22. The woodland appeals to all children and is frequently the topic in history, geography, botany, literature, and nature study as well as drawing. A few broad, gray strokes will give the sky. With a cloth, erase tree tops for the distance and a few vertical lines for tree trunks. Use the vertical strokes suggested in No. 9 for the light tones in the trees and charcoal for the darks to produce the cylindrical effect. Mass the foliage as in the trees previously drawn and add the necessary markings for branches.

No. 23. A landscape with the old house in the foreground gives an opportunity to put into practice many of the previous suggestions.

No. 24. This sketch was asked for as an illustration for the study of colonial history. In both No. 23 and No. 24 the sky is drawn by the use of the horizontal stroke and the clouds, trees, and distance erased with a bit of soft cloth. The strokes used in the buildings and fence are evident and need no interpretation.

Plate No. 12 shows two looms made by the children, and the beginning of the rugs they are weaving from their own designs. The illustration is from the blackboard drawing made by the teacher to show how the Indians made and used a loom. This illustration has been used in history, geography, and manual training.

Lessons in geography often require quick illustration. The school building may not be well located for this study, or the teacher is not fortunate enough to have a good series of pictures for the use of his class. In such cases, or in any case, even when he has other material, blackboard illustration will help the children. No. 25, No. 26, and No. 27, Plate 13, suggests useful sketches.

Such topics as the clouds, the mountains, the plain, the valley, the brook, the waterfall, the beach, the ocean, the cliff, and innumerable others are easily and quickly illustrated in this manner. The teacher who in a few moments can take advantage of this graphic language finds the lessons a delight to himself and to the class.

Animal drawing is an extremely interesting lesson for the children, at the same time a rather difficult one for many teachers. On Plate 14 will be found a few drawings suggesting how few lines will indicate the general outline and how few strokes of the side of the chalk will suggest the surface.

There are special days, seasons, or occasions when blackboard drawings may be used to advantage for illustration.

Thanksgiving stories are anticipated by the children, and Thanksgiving pictures as well. These old, old scenes, ever new, appeal to us all whether pupils or teachers. There are the settlement of New England, the first Thanksgiving, the harvest time, the family gathering, and numerous events which suggest illustration. In many schools there is the delightful custom of remembering some unfortunate family. The children bring to the school gifts of clothing, groceries, vegetables, etc., and assist the teacher in packing these good things, and great is their joy in giving.



Plate 15. This drawing will answer as an illustration of harvest time, or perhaps the gift itself to be packed and sent away. Our lesson in object drawing may be from these or similar objects. In this sketch a few vertical strokes give the background and box, similar curving strokes the barrel, and



horizontal strokes the floor. The vegetables are drawn by using the suggestions found in No. 9, Plate 3. The kernels of corn are represented by the use of a very small piece of chalk and stroke No. 10, and the husks by using No. 5, No. 6, and No. 7, Plate 2. The details are added with the point of the chalk, and charcoal is used in the shadows.

Christmas time of all seasons in the year is the one the children most love, and there are innumerable stories and Christmas lessons for the little ones. Let me give you a few verses I heard in the first grade and the illustration used.

Christmas-day was coming, Christmas-eve drew near;
Fir-trees they were talking low, at midnight cold and clear,
And this is what the fir-tree said, all in the pale moonlight,
“Now which of us shall chosen be to grace the ‘Holy Night’?”

The tall trees and the goodly trees raised each a lofty head,
In glad and secret confidence, tho’ not a word they said,
But one, the baby of the band, could not restrain a sigh:
“You all will be approved,” said he, “but oh, what chance
have I?”

“I am so small, so very small, no one will mark or know
How thick and green my needles are, how true my branches
grow;
Few toys or candles could I hold, but heart and will are free,
And in my heart of hearts I know I am a Christmas-tree.”

The children told of the woodman who took his axe and started in search of a tree for his baby at home; of the delight of the little tree at being chosen, and of the joy of the little daughter when she saw it arrayed and holding her Christmas gifts. The accompanying drawing will serve as an illustration for this story or as a sketch of the forest in winter.

Plate 16. In this sketch use the strokes suggested for illustrations No. 13, Plate 5, and No. 22, Plate 10. Use the side

of the chalk, hardly touching the board and keeping the drawing very gray. Accent with a strong pressure the parts representing snow.

This is but one suggestion. There is the inevitable Christmas tree with the toys and gifts, Santa Claus bearing his bundle of gifts or going down the chimney, and the fireplace with the stockings, all of which are quickly drawn in the manner given in previous sketches.

Washington's birthday brings to mind the stories of his life, and pictures may be found illustrating these incidents. One or two which all may see and discuss will prove valuable.

Plate 17 will show a few drawings which have been used to advantage.

- A. Near Washington's Birthplace.
- B. Mt. Vernon.
- C. An old Stage Coach.

In these sketches the strokes used are evident.

Again, Patriots' Day and Memorial Day present many ideas in regard to blackboard drawing and decoration. Some of these illustrations are deplorable. I well remember one schoolroom which I visited and the drawings which were upon the boards. On one side was a sketch of a pyramid of cannon balls, next, several guns stacked, then two swords crossed at right angles. On another side was a cannon, a wreath of some sort around the stenciled portrait of a dead hero, a tombstone with an inscription, and so on about the room, everything suggesting war, misery, bloodshed, and death.

Can we not find something other than such illustrations, and bring to the thought of the children love of home and



country, and a reverence for those who gave their lives for their protection?

I have seen Plate 18 used in a schoolroom and feel sure it performed its mission.



Plate 19 will perhaps suggest its use. In these drawings the board is slightly covered with either chalk or charcoal. In A about ten strokes of the chalk and the charcoal outline finish the drawing of the lantern. B is done almost entirely with



Plate 19

charcoal, the chalk being used only in a few gray tones and the touches of light in the distance. C is produced by using the chalk in horizontal strokes and wiping out the trees with a cloth. A few touches of charcoal will give the foliage, and the bridge is added with simple strokes with the side of the chalk.



Plate 20. This was taken from a Kindergarten room in which the children were celebrating Froebel's birthday. The drawings upon this plate were made by the use of the simple strokes given or suggested in the plates shown in the first part of this article.

There are other days of local interest which are celebrated in various localities and the grade teacher will find that the use of illustrations will appeal to the children, hold their interest and impress upon them a central thought in the lesson.

Whether teaching drawing or some other study in the curriculum, the teacher aims to make his work effective, and if he should once try blackboard illustration, he will find it an invaluable aid towards making clear or emphasizing important points.



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